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ABSTRACT

A frequently cited explanation for women's underrepresentation in educational administration is the incongruence between traditional administrative role stereotypes and gender stereotypes. However, this paper posits that certain educational and demographic trends may influence school administrator roles to become less stereotypically masculine. Simultaneously, substantial numbers of administrative openings are anticipated, and significant numbers of women are securing administrative credentials. These forces may combine to increase women's representation in school administration. This paper aims to: (1) discuss the nature of sex role stereotyping in administrator selection; (2) describe educational reform and student demographic trends that may reshape school administrators' roles; (3) describe certain demographic trends involving school personnel that may increase women's educational leadership opportunities; and (4) discuss how these trends and patterns may combine to influence greater representation of women in school administration. The 1980s educational reform movement has spawned numerous changes (including site-based management, teacher empowerment, instructional leadership, and school effectiveness efforts) that may significantly alter the image of schools and school leadership. By the late 1990s, enrollment figures for school-aged children will approximate those of the early 1970s. This trend and the problems of a changing student population suggest a need for a different type of administrator--an "instructional physician," rather than an "executive manager" or "coach." The weakening of the dissonance between administrator role stereotypes and female stereotypes at a time of increasing educational leadership opportunities should see more women in administrative positions. (35 references) (Author/MLH)

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EDUCATIONAL MEGATRENDS AND INCREASED FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

One of the most frequently cited explanations for women's underrepresentation in educational administration is the incongruence between traditional administrative role stereotypes and gender stereotypes. However, this paper posits that certain educational and demographic trends may influence school administrator roles to become less stereotypically masculine. Simultaneously, substantial numbers of administrative openings are anticipated and significant numbers of women are securing administrative credentials. These forces may combine to increase women's representation in school administration. The purpose of this chapter is: 1) to discuss the nature of sex-role stereotyping in administrator selection; 2) to describe educational reform trends and student demographic trends that may reshape the role of school administrators to be less stereotypically masculine; 3) to describe certain demographic trends of school personnel that may increase educational leadership opportunities for women; and 4) to discuss how these trends and patterns may combine to influence greater representation of women in school administration.

EDUCATIONAL MEGATRENDS AND INCREASED FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Forecasters of "megatrends" in the business world have suggested that the 1990's will be the decade of women in leadership (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990). It is the thesis of this paper that a similar change will occur in the ranks of school administrators, and that the increased representation of women in school administration may be due to the combined effect of several educational and demographic trends. The paper describes these trends and discusses the implications for female leadership in schools using the following line of reasoning.

First, one of the most frequently cited explanations for women's underrepresentation in school administration is sex-role stereotyping --- that is, the incongruence between traditional administrator role stereotypes and gender stereotypes. However, there are a number of current and predicted educational reform trends and student demographic trends which may reshape the role of school administrators to be less stereotypically masculine. Educational reform trends include emphases on concepts and practices such as site-based management and other decentralized or shared governance structures, teacher empowerment, instructional leadership, and effective school efforts. Student demographic trends include an increasing proportion of minority children in the schools (especially larger school districts); a substantial number of children with learning and achievement problems as well as children who are victims of social problems such as divorce, poverty, or drug and alcohol abuse.

Simultaneously, demographic trends among school personnel may create greater opportunities for women in educational leadership. Demographic trends among school personnel include a predicted high turnover among school

administrators and a steadily increasing number of women securing credentials in educational administration.

These educational and demographic trends may combine to reduce women's barriers to educational leadership and to increase women's representation among school administrators. Specifically, educational and student demographic factors may reshape the traditional role definition or image of school administrators to be less stereotypically masculine. A change in role stereotype may reduce the dissonance between traditional administrator role stereotypes and gender stereotypes, thus allowing women greater access to positions of educational leadership. Correspondingly, women may be able to take advantage of increased leadership opportunities due to the anticipated high turnover among school administrators and due to the significant number of women obtaining administrative credentials (See Figure).

Therefore, the purpose of the proposed paper is: 1) to discuss the nature of sex-role stereotyping in administrator selection; 2) to describe educational reform trends and student demographic trends that may reshape the role of school administrators to be less stereotypically masculine; 3) to describe demographic trends of school personnel that may increase women's educational leadership opportunities; and 4) to discuss how these trends and patterns may combine to influence greater representation of women in school administration.

Sex-Role Stereotyping and Administrator Selection

Many studies have cited traditional sex-role stereotyping as one of the most common reasons for women's underrepresentation in school administration (see, for example, Adkison, 1981; Gross & Trask, 1976; Jones & Montenegro

(1983); Leonard & Papa-Lewis, (1987); Marshall, (1984); Metzger, 1985); Shakeshaft, 1986; and Yeakey, Johnston, & Adkison, 1986). That is, because the traditional stereotype of school administrators is not consistent with traditional female stereotypes, women are less likely to be selected for school administrative positions. Although numerous studies have addressed sex-role stereotyping as a barrier to women's representation in educational leadership positions, proportionately more emphasis has been placed on the erroneous nature of gender stereotypes than on the erroneous nature of job stereotypes.

Person-perception literature has documented evaluators' reliance on stereotypes to make decisions and attributions about persons based on their group membership such as race, sex, and age (Stewart, Powell, & Chetwynd, 1979). Also, personnel selection research has uncovered numerous candidate characteristics which inappropriately influence selection decisions (see Arvey, 1979; Arvey & Campion, 1982). More specifically, studies have indicated that applicants who apply for positions that are stereotypically incongruent with their sex are often given lower evaluation ratings, regardless of sex (Cash, Gillen, & Burns, 1977).

Additionally, other candidate characteristics may interact with gender to exaggerate perceptions of gender-related attributes. For instance, Gillen (1981) found that physical attractiveness exaggerated perceptions of gender-related attributes. That is, attractive women may be regarded as more feminine than unattractive women, and attractive men may be regarded as more masculine than unattractive men. As a result, attractive persons may be regarded as even less suitable for sex-incongruent positions (Heilman & Saruwatari, 1979). In stereotypically male occupations such as educational

administration, women (and to an even greater degree, attractive women) may have difficulty securing administrative positions.

Collectively, selection research has indicated that the selection process is typically a search for the "ideal" candidate ---that is, a candidate who matches the "image" present in the interviewer's mind --- a candidate who matches the "image" of the role or position. Consequently, because school administrator positions have typically been dominated by males and defined in more masculine terms --- that is, school administrators have been stereotypically characterized by word images and descriptors such as "strong", "in control", or "powerful" --- it is not surprising that female stereotypes do not match administrative job stereotypes. As a result of the incongruence between administrator role "images" and female "images", women may not be selected for some administrative positions because they simply "do not look like an administrator."

This assertion may be substantiated by several observations. First, educational administration professors have noted that it is easier to place women in administrative positions in school districts where women previously have been appointed to administrative roles and where school boards have become accustomed to "seeing" women in leadership positions (Pounder, 1989). Second, some administrative positions seem particularly difficult for women to obtain (e.g. superintendencies and secondary principalships), perhaps because these positions carry a relatively stronger masculine image than others (e.g. elementary principalships and central office staff positions). Third, although women still comprise only 12% of the educational administration professoriate, approximately 36% of the assistant professors in educational administration are females (McCarthy, Kuh, Newell, & Iacona, 1988). Women

have apparently been more successful in breaking into the ranks of higher education faculty than in breaking into most K-12 (or higher education) administrative positions. This also may be a reflection of the relatively less masculine image of faculty roles than of administrative roles.

Educational Reform Trends and Implications for School Administrator Roles

The 1980's educational reform movement has spawned a number of educational trends including site-based management (or similar decentralized/shared governance structures), teacher empowerment, instructional leadership, and effective school efforts. Although much of the research on these trends is inconclusive, methodologically fragmented, or in the "infant" stage of development, these concepts nonetheless have a certain popular appeal and are well-recognized among the community of educators. (For a discussion of related research, see such works as Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1989; Johnson, 1989; Lieberman, 1988; Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Greenfield, 1987; Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Because these trends are commonly recognized, they may have a significant impact on the image of schools and school leadership. For instance, site-based management depicts local schools with greater decision autonomy and with shared decision participation by local school educators and community members. Teacher empowerment suggests an image of teachers who assert themselves as educational leaders beyond the classroom, exerting significant power and influence in the educational system. Instructional leadership portrays administrators as leaders whose predominant emphasis is on the instructional supervision and instructional program components of their role, rather than administrators whose primary role emphasis is on their

disciplinarian or organizational management responsibilities. Effective schools literature suggests that high-achieving schools are characterized by high expectations for achievement and a strong emphasis on basic skills instruction, clear instructional goals and objectives and instructional monitoring systems, and a strong programmatic leader who builds a school climate conducive to learning and who monitors instruction and rewards learning.

The net effect of these educational trends is to build a "learning center partnership" image of de-centralized school systems in which instructional issues and shared leadership by teachers and administrators are emphasized. This image is a departure from the "formal bureaucracy" or "factory" image of centralized school systems with top-down regimentation of the rank and file of schools (e.g. Taylor, 1947; Weber, 1947). This revised school image calls for an administrator with a correspondingly revised image --- one who puts instructional issues in the forefront and one who solicits involvement of others in decision-making.

Demographic Trends of Students and Implications for School Administrator Roles

A number of student demographic trends that have evolved since the early 1970's also have major implications for schools and school leadership. First, the population of public elementary school children has begun to increase in the past two to three years and is expected to continue to increase through the mid-to-late 1990's. The population of public secondary school children is expected to experience a corresponding growth by 1991 and continue to rise through the late 1990's. By the late 1990's, enrollment figures for school-age children in public schools is predicted to approximate enrollment figures

of the early 1970's (National Center for Education Statistics, 1989, pp.52-53). [It should be noted that enrollment increases vary from state to state with the greatest increases occurring in the South, Southwest, and West (National Center for Education Statistics, 1988b, p. 40.)]

Moreover, racial and ethnic minority children are expected to represent a substantial proportion of this increased school population --- especially in large school districts. In the decade between 1976 and 1986, the proportion of white students in public schools dropped from 76% to 70%, with a corresponding increase of minorities from 24% to 30%. The most dramatic increase in minority population was among Hispanic students [a 44% increase] and Asian students [a 116% increase] (National Center for Education Statistics, 1989, pp. 54-55). These minority students were more strongly represented in the largest school districts (enrollments over 40,000 students) where about 20% of all students are enrolled, but about 42% of all minority students are enrolled. By contrast, small school districts (enrollments less than 1,200 students) contained about 10% of all students, but less than 4% of minority students (National Center for Education Statistics, 1987a, p.64).

Student learning and achievement indices have also undergone some meaningful changes. From 1976-77 to 1986-87, the percent of pupils served in programs for the handicapped increased from 8% to 11%. However, indices of reading achievement suggested some improvement between 1971 and 1984, with improvements in achievement of minority and disadvantaged youth reducing the gap between their performance and that of other students. However, the average reading proficiency of Black and Hispanic 17-year-olds was only slightly higher than that of White 13-year-olds (National Center for Education Statistics, 1988b, p. 38). Mathematics achievement scores have

generally declined since the late 1960's, but recent reports suggest a slight upturn in the mathematics performance of students on lower-level skills such as routine computations and measurement, while performance on more complex procedures and analytical problem-solving remains well below student proficiency scores of 1973 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1988b, pp. 18-19).

The trends in family profiles of students have also changed. The percent of students living in married couple families fell from 50% in 1970 to 39% in 1984. Nearly 20% of all children under 18 lived with one parent in 1984, a figure almost double that of 1970, with the predominance of these children living in households headed by females (National Center for Education Statistics, 1987b, pp. 4,20-21).

The economic profiles of families and families with single female householders with school-age children generally suffered from the early 1970's to the mid-1980's. For instance, in families with school-age children, the percent below the poverty level rose from 15% to 20% between 1970 and 1985 while households headed by females with school-age children remained stable, although high, at approximately 53%. For families of school-age children, the most noticeable increases were among white families, Hispanic families, and Hispanic families with female heads of household (National Center for Education Statistics, 1987b, p. 22).

Social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse have received a good deal of media attention but it is hard to get reliable figures concerning the degree to which students are affected by these problems. The National Center for Education Statistics (1987b, p.32) reports a general rise in alcohol and drug use among high school seniors from 1975 to 1980-81, followed by a slight

decline through 1985. Nevertheless, alcohol and drug use among high school seniors remains higher than reported in 1975, with the most noticeable increase in the use of cocaine and with the largest proportion of students using alcohol (National Center for Education Statistics, 1987b, p.100). These figures do not reflect the number of students who are affected by problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse of parents or family members.

These various demographic trends of students have implications for schools and school leadership. These student data suggest that schools and school leaders will need to be continually more attentive to the needs of minorities and disadvantaged youth, with particular responsiveness to their basic instructional requirements (reading, mathematics, etc.) as well as to special instructional programs such as bilingual education or education for handicapped and disadvantaged youth. Further, schools and administrators will be required to place increased attention on supplementary programs which address some of the social problems faced by many students such as divorce, poverty, or drug and alcohol abuse.

These trends and problems of a changing student population suggest a need for a different type of administrator --- an "instructional physician" rather than an "executive manager" or "coach" --- a humanistic student advocate with expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of cognitive, psychological, and social problems of children rather than a bureaucratic manager with an emphasis on organizational authority, uniformity, conformity, and control. The changing needs of the student population could be expected to alter the traditional role definition or stereotypic image of school administrators.

Demographic Trends of School Personnel and Leadership Opportunities for Women

Corresponding to the anticipated student population increase is a projected demand for new hiring of teachers. This demand is expected to increase by more than 35% before stabilizing in 1995, with most of the increase occurring at the secondary level where the increase is estimated at 80% (National Center for Education Statistics, 1988a, pp.44-45). Currently, females represent approximately 69% of the public school teaching force (National Center for Education Statistics, 1988b, p.70).

The demand for hiring new administrators is more difficult to estimate due to the scarcity of national survey data on administrator turnover. A study of high school leaders by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1988, p.5) reported that 35% of current high school principals are 50 years of age or older, suggesting that a substantial number of high school principals will be eligible for retirement in the next 10 to 15 years. Further, the average age of high school principals is higher in larger school districts and communities, and, proportionately fewer high school principals over 50 years of age are found in the South and Midwest than in other regions of the country (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988). Some statewide studies report that as many as 50% of public school principals plan to retire within the next five years (e.g. Slater, 1989).

Currently, women represent approximately 26% of school administrators, with proportionately more women administrators occupying elementary principalships (25% female) and central office staff positions, with proportionately few in secondary principalships (8.3% female) and superintendencies (2.7% female) (American Association of School Administrators, 1985). Further, data on high school administrators suggest

that women are more strongly represented in larger school districts and communities than in more rural areas, and women are more strongly represented as administrators of public alternative and special schools than as administrators of public comprehensive schools (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988, p. 148).

Current trends in educational administration preparation programs suggest that the number of women receiving advanced degrees is approaching 50% of the educational administration student population. Specifically, from the early 1970's to the early 1980's, the number of women receiving master's degrees in educational administration rose from 21% to 46%, and during the same period, the number of women receiving doctoral degrees in educational administration rose from 6% to 39% (National Center for Education Statistics, 1975, 1986).

The effect of these demographic trends suggest that women may have increased opportunities for leadership in public schools --- both as teachers and as school administrators. If increasingly more schools empower teachers with leadership responsibilities, women may influence schools substantially because their numbers dominate the teaching force. Also, as a reasonably high turnover in administrators corresponds to the increased number of women preparing for administrative careers, proportionately more women may seek and be appointed to administrative roles --- especially if they have had an opportunity to demonstrate their school leadership ability as teachers and if they do not experience barriers to administrative positions such as sex-role stereotyping (discussed above). Further, women may have an especially strong likelihood of being appointed to administrative positions in larger school districts and communities where proportionately more retirements are expected

to occur and where women have previously been more successful in receiving administrative appointments (see Endnote 1).

Combined Effects of Androgynous Administrator Role Stereotypes and Increased Educational Leadership Opportunities

The educational and student demographic trends cited above have implications for changing the traditional administrator role stereotype, and further, creating a new image which may be more "androgynous". For instance, the image of administrators as instructional program experts or the image of administrators as facilitators of effective group decisionmaking is not a definitively masculine model. An educational leader who serves as a child advocate and who is sensitive to and promotes the cognitive, psychological, and social well-being of students is not consistent with a prototypic male role. To the degree that these educational and demographic trends persist, the stereotype of administrator roles may become more gender-neutral or androgynous.

With a change in administrator role stereotypes, the incongruence between position stereotypes and female stereotypes may be reduced. To the degree that reduced barriers of sex-role stereotyping correspond with increased leadership opportunities due to a significant number of administrative vacancies and a substantial number of women earning administrative credentials, the proportion of women occupying school administration positions may be dramatically increased. Women as well as men will fit the role image and will "look like administrators".

Moreover, research on the effectiveness of female administrators suggests that women are particularly skillful at instructional leadership

responsibilities and work well with others to facilitate shared decision-making, and in some cases outperform their male counterparts in these respects (Fischel & Pottker, 1977). These findings would suggest that women are as well-suited as men (if not more so) for the administrative roles and responsibilities prescribed by the educational and demographic trends described above.

Summary

The educational reform movement of the 1980's has spawned a number of educational trends which may reshape the role definition of administrators to be less stereotypically masculine. Similarly, demographic trends of the student population are precipitating changes in the role demands of administrators. These factors may combine to influence administrator role stereotypes to become more androgynous and less stereotypically masculine, thus reducing the sex-role stereotyping barrier of women to administrative positions. Because the dissonance between administrator role stereotypes and female stereotypes may be weakened at a time when increasingly more educational leadership opportunities are coming available due to increased administrator turnover and greater numbers of women with administrative credentials, women are predicted to be significantly more well represented in school administration positions.

Endnotes

1) Some of the same demographic trends, and in particular, the increase in the minority student population could have even stronger implications for increased placement of minorities in positions of educational leadership. However, because there is such a dirth of minorities in the field of education, there may be inadequate numbers to fill the expected need created by the increased minority student population in combination with the anticipated administrator turnover --- especially in more urban centers. As a result, because women have been relatively more successful in securing administrative roles in urban school districts than in more rural districts, women may have increased leadership opportunities in spite of a possible high demand for minority administrators.

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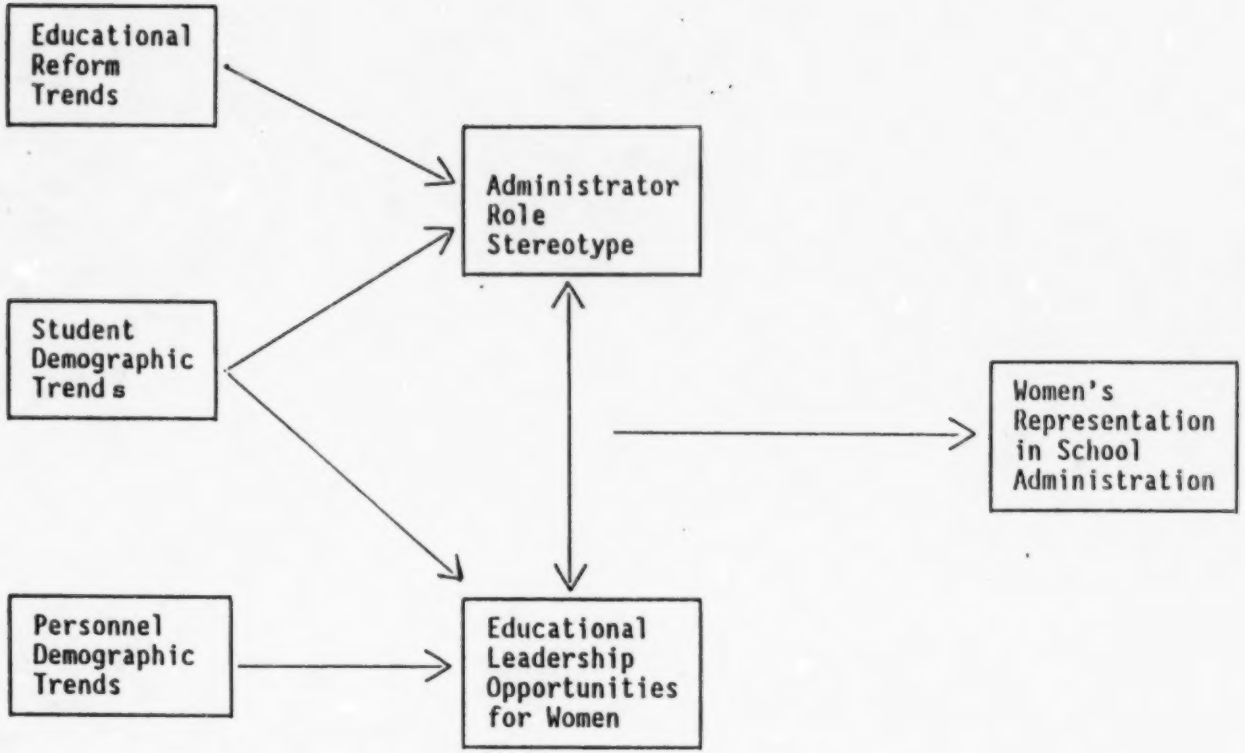
Educational Reform Trends
Administrator Role Stereotype
Student Demographic Trends
Women's Representation in School Administration
Personnel Demographic Trends
Educational Leadership Opportunities for Women

FIGURE 1